

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend claims 1 and 4 and add claim 22, as shown in the following listing of claims, which will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

**Listing of claims:**

1 (currently amended). A purified protein which comprises ~~the same or substantially the same amino acid sequence as the amino acid sequence represented by SEQ ID NO:1~~ or an amino acid sequence having at least 90% homology to the amino acid sequence represented by SEQ ID NO:1, or a salt thereof.

2. (canceled)

3 (withdrawn). A DNA which comprises a DNA encoding the protein according to claim 1.

4 (withdrawn). A DNA according to claim 3, which is represented by SEQ ID NO:2 or SEQ ID NO:3.

5 (withdrawn). A recombinant vector which comprises the DNA according to claim 3.

6 (withdrawn). A transformant transformed with the recombinant vector according to claim 5.

7 (withdrawn). A method of producing the protein or its salt according to claim 1, which comprises culturing the transformant according to claim 6, and producing and accumulating the protein according to claim 1.

8 (withdrawn). An antibody to the protein according to claim 1, the partial peptide according to claim 2, or a salt thereof.

9 (currently amended). A method of determining a ligand to the protein or its salt according to claim 1, which comprises bringing a test compound in contact with the protein or a salt thereof according to claim 1 ~~using the protein according to claim 1 or the partial peptide according to claim 2, or a salt thereof.~~

10 (withdrawn). A method of screening a compound or its salt that alters the binding property between a ligand and the protein or its salt according to claim 1, which comprises using the protein according to claim 1, the partial peptide according to claim 2, or a salt thereof.

11 (currently amended). A kit for screening a compound or its salt that alters the binding property between a ligand and the protein or its salt according to claim 1, comprising the protein or its salt according to claim 1 ~~or the partial peptide according to claim 2, or a salt thereof.~~

12 (withdrawn). A compound or its salt that alters the binding property between a ligand and the protein or its salt according to claim 1, which is obtainable using the screening method according to claim 10 or the screening kit according to claim 11.

13 (withdrawn). A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound or its salt that alters the binding property between a ligand and the protein or its salt according to claim 1, which is obtainable using the screening method according to claim 10 or the screening kit according to claim 11.

14 (withdrawn). A DNA that hybridizes to the DNA according to claim 3 under highly stringent conditions.